

Good evening, members of the Appropriation Committee,

My name is Debbie Carpenter, I work for Gilead Community Services, at the Gateway program in Chester, CT.

I was told I should thank you for the 4% Cost of Living Adjustment. Thanks for nothing. I or my coworkers have not received this. If and when we receive this money, no way does this even come close to an actual Cost of Living Adjustment.

Community nonprofits have been underfunded for years and those of us on the front lines have seen devastating effect of this lack of support from the state. Because of the lack of funding and support from the state there is a mass exodus of mental health workers from community nonprofits.

Coworkers are leaving the nonprofits and getting jobs elsewhere, where they are able to make a living wage. People are not applying to these low wage jobs that require college degrees. Those of us that are left trying to provide services to clients are tired. Tired because we are mandated to work extra shifts because of staff shortages. Tired because you have to pick up shifts to support ourselves and our families. This cannot be done on a 40 hour week. Tired because we have more clients, because the exiting case managers are not being replaced.

Clients are frustrated, they don't know who their case manager, therapist, or psychiatrist is week from week. Staff members are overworked and rushed. Clients are not receiving services they have in the past. When someone with mental health issues does not received adequate services things happen. Last spring we had a client burn down a house, which left 6 people homeless. Could this have been prevented? I say, maybe.

I am not sure about the turnout for these testimonies, tonight. Like I said we are tired. We are tired of thinking that any of you actually care about us or our clients. We are tired of hearing about a mental health crisis in the state and country, and everyone expecting us to take care of it without proper funding or staff. We are tired of hearing how great the state was in giving us 4%, which works out to \$26 a week before taxes. We are tired of waiting to see this in our pay checks if we will even notice. We are tired of explaining to our clients who their new case manager is because the one they had last week quit. We are tired of training new people who leave for better pay. We are tired of picking up the work load of others after they quit. We are tired of being asked to explain to the Appropriations Committee why the state should fund nonprofits. (I've been doing this for 10 years) We are tired of being hopeful that things will change. We are tired of believing that you will do the right thing and honor the long – term plan to address underfunding of community nonprofits. We are just tired.